

Top Secret



National Intelligence Bulletin

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April 15, 1976

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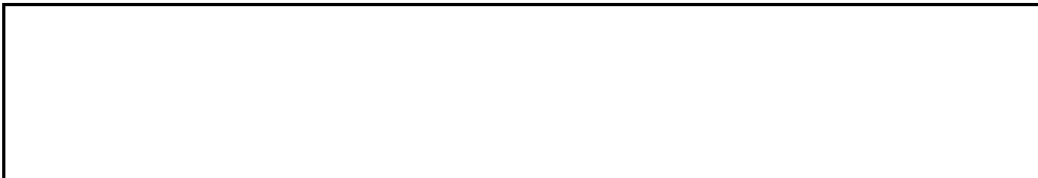
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LEBANON

Syria may be preparing to move more forces to the Lebanese border area.

The US defense attache in Damascus yesterday observed 40 to 50 tank transporters near a garrison of Syria's 1st Armored Division at Al Kiswah, approximately 10 miles south of Damascus. This is the first time the attache has seen so many transporters in the area. It was not clear if they were loading or unloading, but the attache believes any additional Syrian forces destined for Lebanon would be drawn from the 1st Division.

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Top Israeli leaders continue to be cautious in their public reactions to developments in Lebanon and their treatment of the possibility of Israeli military intervention. They have tried to avoid raising the issue; statements this week by Prime Minister Rabin, Defense Minister Peres, and Foreign Minister Allon have been only in response to questions.

Rabin emphasized that Israel would be "well advised to exercise careful judgment about the complex reality in Lebanon." He said the government would act only if it believed that Israel's security were directly threatened, adding that it would take only those measures deemed necessary to restore security.

Peres, in a similar vein, cautioned that Israel must consider that its military intervention would not restore the situation to what it was before the fighting began. The Israeli government, he said, also must consider whether intervention would not simply serve the interests of the fedayeen and radical Lebanese leftists by uniting the Arabs and the warring factions in Lebanon into a common front against Israel. Rabin pointed out that the situation in Lebanon has divided the Arabs to the point that Syria has become "the savior of the Christians."

The Israeli press continues to highlight Lebanon, focusing in particular on Syria's role. One of Israel's best-informed military correspondents commented yesterday that Israel might be forced to intervene in southern Lebanon not only if Israel's northern border is threatened but also if the Syrians should occupy portions of Lebanon for an extended period of time. An editorial in Israel's most prestigious daily asserts that Israel's strategic position has been weakened over the long run by events in Lebanon.

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The Syrian troops that have moved into the ports of Tyre and Sidon presumably are attempting to prevent resupply of Lebanese leftist forces by Arab states opposed to the Syrian initiative in Lebanon and to limit anti-Syrian political demonstrations.

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TURKEY

The latest outbreak of student violence, which resulted in three deaths last week, has once again thrust the country's chronic student unrest and associated street violence into the political limelight. Even though the Turkish political establishment has seemed inured to sporadic student violence, political leaders were shocked to learn that one of last week's victims was the son of a prominent politician.

There is little inclination on the part of politicians, however, to move beyond attempting to fix the blame on each other. Prime Minister Demirel seems convinced that he can continue to put off making the hard political decision—for example, taking over the universities or declaring martial law—that seems required sooner or later.

It may in fact require a clear signal from the military that it is willing to support such measures before Demirel will act. Earlier this year, the military turned down a request from the Prime Minister to impose martial law.

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CAMBODIA

The Khmer communists completed their governmental reorganization yesterday by announcing new appointments to the top positions.

Former deputy prime minister Khieu Samphan has assumed the position of chairman of the State Presidium, which the Cambodian constitution vaguely defines as the country's leading executive authority. Although Cambodia appears to have collective leadership, Samphan's new position supports past indications that he plays the key role.

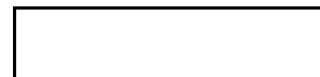
Several other leading communist figures—notably deputy prime ministers Ieng Sary and Son Sen—have retained the cabinet portfolios they have held since last August. Their wives have been given the social action and culture and education portfolios. Former minister of interior Hou Yuon, who has not appeared publicly since the communist take-over, has apparently been dropped from the cabinet.

Several unknowns have been named to top positions. The prime ministership went to Tol Saut, a newly elected member of the popular assembly, but otherwise a political nonentity. The other unknowns, Sor Thon and Ngean Ros, were named as deputy chairmen of the Presidium under Khieu Samphan. Although all three are presumably party officials, there is no indication what weight, if any, they carry in the leadership.

Former prime minister Penn Nouth was named "high counselor" to the Presidium, with rank "equivalent to that of prime minister." He is the only figure formerly associated with retired chief of state Prince Sihanouk to be announced in the new government, and his retention suggests that he will continue his ceremonial duties as the one remaining symbol of non-communist participation in the government.



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CUBA

An attack by Cuban exiles on two Cuban fishing boats last week has evoked a strong protest note from Havana to Washington and is likely to be a major theme of Cuban ceremonies this weekend marking the anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

The incident, in which one fisherman was killed and several reportedly wounded, gives Castro a nationalistic issue to exploit at a time when much of the population remains unsettled about the costs of the Cuban intervention in Angola.

Castro has frequently taken advantage of the April 19 anniversary to launch bitter verbal attacks on the US and is not likely to pass up this opportunity to justify Cuban support for "anti-imperialist" activities anywhere in the world. He used a similar incident by exiles in May 1970 to belabor the US and divert public attention from his government's failure to meet an important economic goal.

Whoever speaks on April 19, much of what is said will probably be intended primarily for the Cuban people rather than the US. Havana's domestic radio broadcasts have charged the US with "evident complicity" in the raid, but the protest note stopped well short of any such accusation. Its language suggests that while Cuban officials at the policy level may have dismissed earlier US threats as mere saber rattling, they are concerned that the strong statements by US officials might have been interpreted by exiles as a license to carry out paramilitary activities against Cuba unhampered by US law enforcement agencies.

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PANAMA

The National Guard is expecting a rash of student protest activity in the near future, basically over local education issues. There is a possibility, however, that the activities could develop into anti-US demonstrations.

National Guard officials expect trouble after the new school year gets fully under way following the end of Easter week.

In addition to a variety of education issues, radical leftist students are expected to exploit other grievances, such as the exiling of two prominent leftists in January, the recent unexplained death of a university student—attributed by some to the National Guard—and the canal treaty issue.

National Guard leaders believe the sovereignty issue could prompt student disturbances, perhaps against the canal zone.

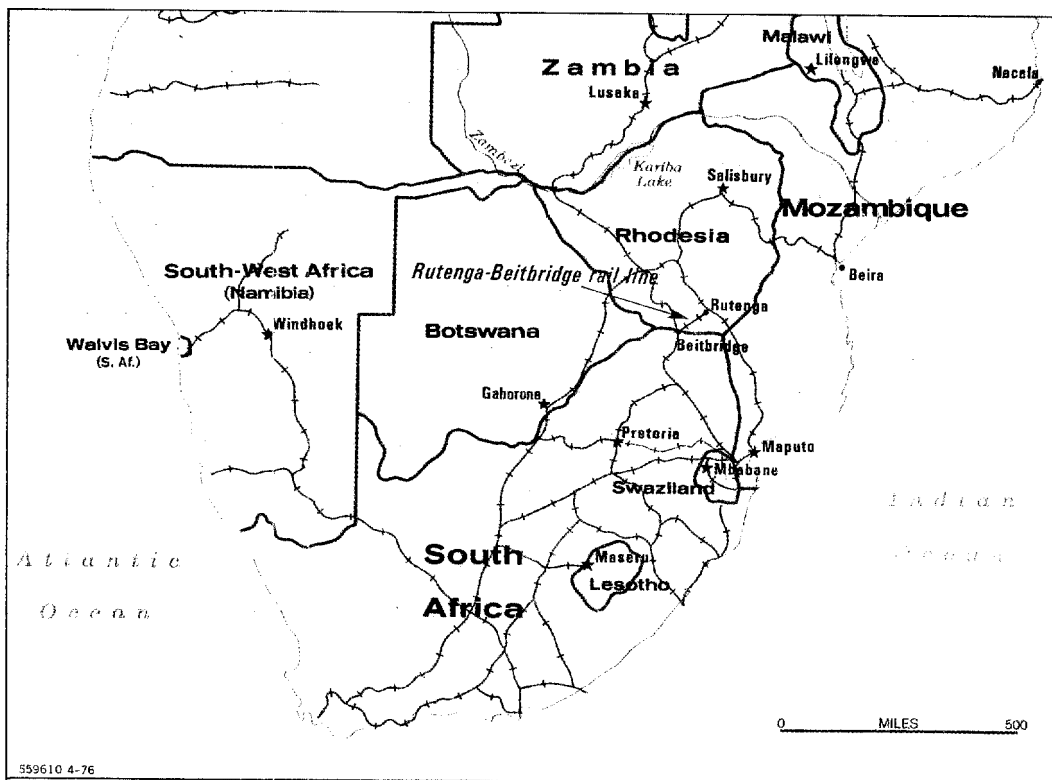
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RHODESIA

Rhodesian guerrillas operating out of Mozambique have apparently tried to interdict Salisbury's key rail link to South Africa. Rhodesia announced on April 8 that a bomb had been found on the Rutenga-Beitbridge rail line, which ties in with South Africa's rail system and ports.

In recent months, Rhodesian guerrillas have been moving from Mozambique into southeastern Rhodesia. Until now, government security forces had been able to contain most guerrilla activities within a few miles of the border, but a few insurgent reconnaissance teams have been able to penetrate nearly 150 miles into Rhodesia.

About 70 percent of Rhodesia's foreign trade presently moves over the Rutenga-Beitbridge rail line to South African ports. Interdiction of this line would seriously hamper Rhodesian trade, inasmuch as the only other rail line for Rhodesian traffic to South African ports is through Botswana and it is operating near its capacity. Mozambique recently closed its rail system to Rhodesian traffic.

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CHAD

An attempt to assassinate Chadian President Felix Malloum on Tuesday failed, but four persons were killed and scores were wounded by exploding grenades. No persons have been apprehended, but a faction of the National Liberation Front of Chad claimed responsibility for the attack.

There is no evidence to substantiate that Chadian rebels were responsible for the attempt, although they continue to launch sporadic operations on military posts in north- and east-central Chad. The attack could just as well have been the work of disgruntled military officers or Chadian merchants who are dissatisfied with Malloum's recent crackdown on their activities.

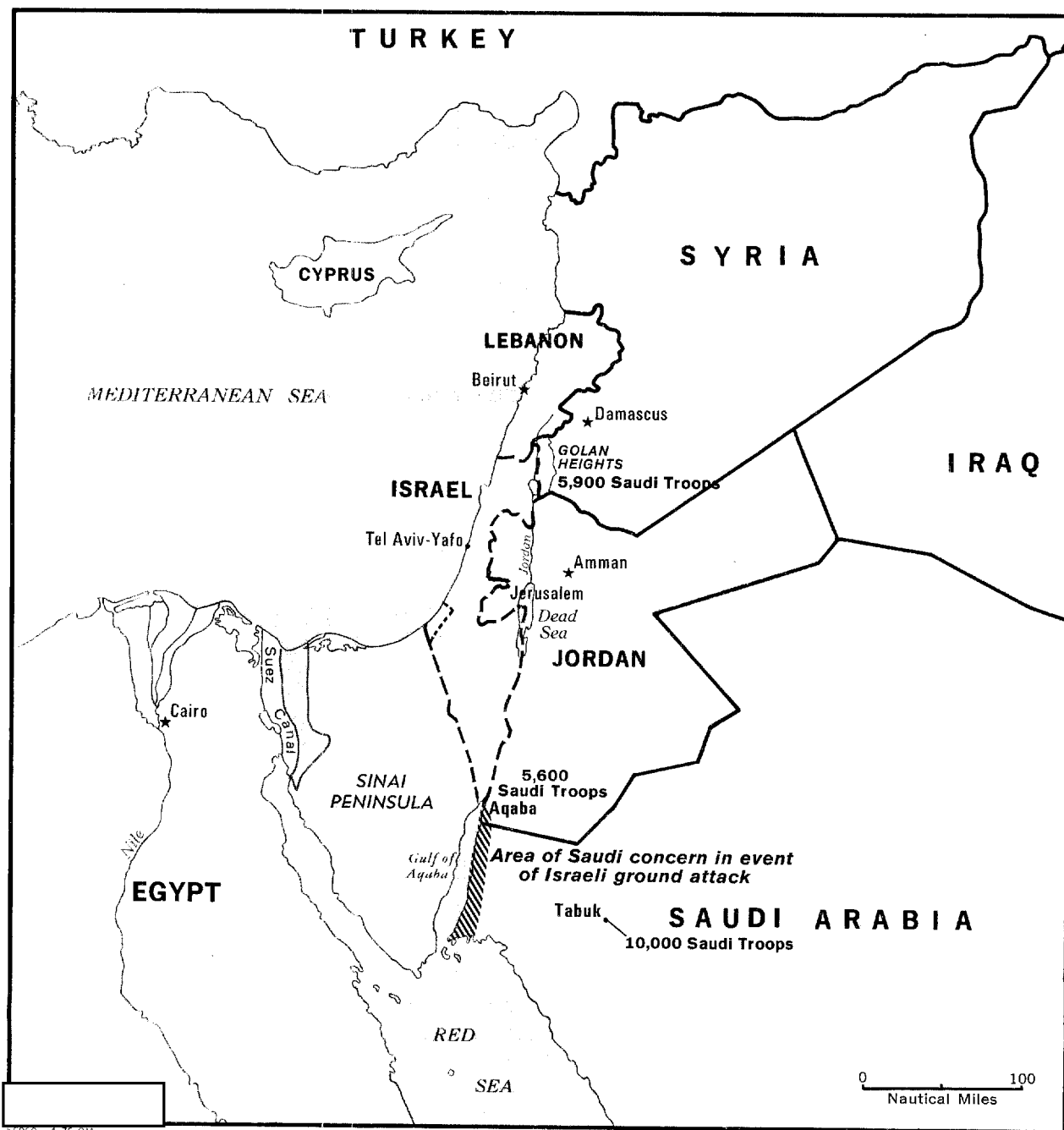
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ANNEX

SAUDI ARABIA MODERNIZING ITS ARMED FORCES

The 1973 Arab-Israeli war had a major effect on Saudi Arabia's view of its role in the Arab-Israeli context. Previously Riyadh had been content to work behind the scenes. The Saudis gave financial aid to the front-line Arab states and supported the Arab position of regaining the occupied Arab lands and securing the rights of the Palestinians.

Since the 1973 war, however, Saudi Arabia has enlarged its military commitment to the Arab cause by stationing some 5,900 troops in Syria, in addition to the 5,600 maintained in southern Jordan since 1967. The commitment of these forces, particularly to Syria, has led to Saudi Arabia's recognition that it would inevitably be involved should general war breakout in the Middle East.

The Saudis are anxious to modernize and strengthen their armed forces, but the program will take some time to implement because of the lack of a broad national military infrastructure. In the near term, Saudi Arabia's power will continue to depend on its ability to use oil as a political weapon and to help finance arms acquisitions by the confrontation states.

Looking to the Future



Several steps have been taken so far to improve the combat capability of the Saudi Arabian armed forces:

--A joint training exercise was held in the Tabuk area last August involving elements of seven Saudi army battalions, supported by F-5 fighter-bombers and a paratroop drop.

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SAUDI ARABIAN ORDER OF BATTLE			
Ground Combat Units			
Total Army Strength (45,000)			
Major Tactical Units	Authorized Per Unit	Average Per Unit	Total Active
4 Infantry Brigades	7,100	4,000	16,000
1 Armored Brigade	3,000	800	800
2 Tank Battalions	400	300	600
3 Artillery Battalions	600	450	1,350
2 Airborne Battalions	850	850	1,700
1 Royal Guard Battalion	450	450	450
16 Air Defense Artillery Batteries	150	100	1,600
10 HAWK Missile Batteries	200	160	1,600
2 Light Armored Battalions	600	500	1,000
Air Units			
Strength (15,000)			
Units	Aircraft		
2 All-Weather Fighter Squadrons	28		
3 Pilot-Training Squadrons	37		
1 Transport Wing (2 Squadrons)	30		
2 Helicopter Squadrons	35		
1 F-5 Operational Conversion Unit	25		
1 F-5 Fighter Squadron	24		
1 Lightning Conversion Unit	8		

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--The exercise included the first nonprogrammed use of close air support to ground units by the Royal Saudi Air Force and the first coordinated use of artillery and air strikes on a single target.

--A new chief of staff for the Saudi Arabian army, General Uthman al Humayd, was appointed in October. The appointment indicates the royal family's desire that this position take on a more important role in military decision-making. The change has been well received by Saudi military personnel, who consider it a step in the direction of modernizing the armed forces.

--A new emphasis has been placed on upgrading both the air force and air defense. The implementation phase is expected to take some time, but this step acknowledges the importance of a modern air-defense program to counter the Israeli threat.

Problems of Modernization

Several logistic and political problems will have to be overcome in the process of modernization. The major problems plaguing the Saudi armed forces have been the lack of qualified technical personnel, a haphazard approach to training, and too few qualified junior officers and noncommissioned officers.

Saudi Arabia remains heavily dependent on foreign military advisers and technicians, and it will be some time before the government will be able to develop technically qualified Saudi personnel to operate sophisticated equipment, such as Hawk missiles, and to run the army and air force maintenance program. The armed forces are facing manpower shortages and have been considering introducing compulsory military service. Saudi Arabia does, however, have many professionally competent army officers and highly qualified pilots who have been trained in the US.

The Saudi royal family has long feared the regular armed forces as a potential threat to the dynasty. As a result, the army has been kept geographically isolated in the northwestern and southern parts of the country. The officers of both the army and air force have been traditionally selected for their political loyalty.

The Saudi Arabian National Guard, which numbers some 35,000 personnel, is considered more loyal than the regular armed forces and has been relied on to block any possible moves by the army to seize power. The increased emphasis on modernization within the army has also forced the Saudis to begin modernizing the National Guard in order to permit it to keep pace with the army.

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Outlook

The military modernization and the impact of foreign advisers and training in both the regular armed forces and the National Guard risk creating pressures for increased social change, which could cause problems for the ruling family.

Nevertheless, the Saudis are determined to continue their present course. They are also willing to take a more active military role if present efforts to achieve peace through negotiation fail. For the foreseeable future, however, the Saudis would have only a minimal effect on any new military confrontation in the Middle East.

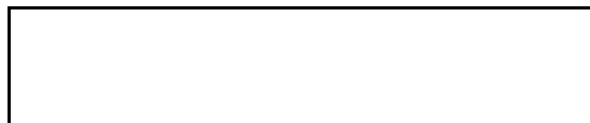
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